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SUBJECT: GORDON BROWN TAKES OVER AS PRIME MINISTER

REF: LONDON 2446

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¶1. (SBU) Gordon Brown is the UK's new Prime Minister. Right on schedule, Tony Blair submitted his resignation to the Queen shortly after 1:00 p.m. today June 27. Within minutes, the Queen had summoned Brown to Buckingham Palace and invited him to form a Government, as Leader of the party that commands a majority in the House of Commons. He was officially declared Leader of the Labour Party on June 24 (reftel), a formality given that he was unopposed. Both the Blair and Brown camps, which have a long history of feuding, have expressed pride in the stable, orderly transition that the party has achieved. For Brown, today stands as the culmination of a quest that goes back well before Blair took over the party in 1994 following the sudden death of John Smith. In a brief statement to reporters upon his arrival at Number 10 Downing Street, Brown pledged to head a "government of all the talents" with "new priorities," aiming to provide "the best of chances for everyone" in Britain to achieve their full potential and make this country "the great global success story of this century."

¶2. (U) The composition of Brown's Cabinet is expected to be known by tomorrow; some key appointments may be made public before the end of today.

¶3. (U) At his last Prime Minister's Questions earlier today, Blair was treated to a gracious send-off including an unprecedented standing ovation as he walked out after the half-hour session. He is reportedly on the train to his constituency of Sedgefield where he is expected to announce this evening that he is standing down as an MP after 24 years. This will allow him to concentrate on trying to help advance the Middle East peace process. At this writing, we do not have official confirmation that he is being named as the Quartet's special envoy, but British media are treating it as a done deal.

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